

Open Education Strategy in a mixed mode university

Institution & Institutional Context

Charles Sturt University is a large regional university of 40,000 students with a footprint covering most of inland New South Wales. CSU is currently Australia's largest distance education provider. Over 65% of students are studying UG and PG courses in off-campus mode. All courses are online regardless of on-campus or off-campus mode. CSU has a strong commitment to indigenous reconciliation and sustainable regional development.

A number of short MOOCs, or tasters, have already been running, mainly in the Business Faculty in partnership with a host provider called IT Masters. These have been very successful in attracting new students. Also just launched by CSU is a MOOC called What's Uni Like? <http://www.whats-uni-like.edu.au/> The MOOC is funded by the national government for use by all Australian universities in raising high school students' aspirations of university education.

Keywords and OEP themes

University strategy; university policy.

What is the case study about?

Institutional response to potential of Open Educational Practices - Charles Sturt University has just begun its journey to incorporate open education practices (OEP) and the use of open education resources (OERs) into institutional policies, practices and curriculum development.

What is the issue or need you are addressing?

Improve visibility of CSU in international online space; seek cost-efficiencies in course design; provide alternative pathways for under-privileged students into CSU.

How was the initiative implemented?

Our initiatives in 2013-2015 included:

- Joined OERu as a partner institution and working towards offering courses in

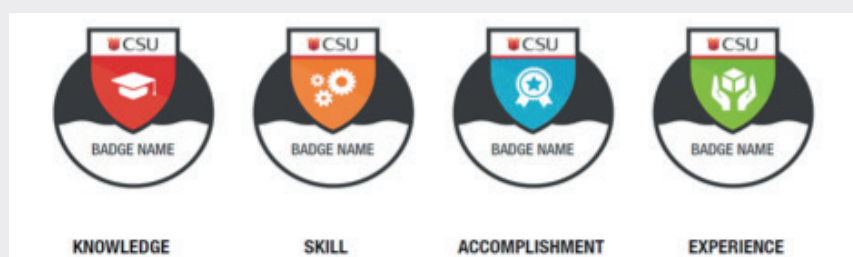
Australian Indigenous cultures
<http://oeru.org/>

- Established a number of other collaborations and networks to build institutional understanding of current open education practices
- Establishment of ulmage as a think-tank and an incubator for educational innovation including OEP
<http://www.csu.edu.au/uimagine/home>
- Within the Division of Student Learning, position descriptions have been revamped for new Director level positions to include OEP and OERs in the selection criteria and position responsibility
- Focus on Open Education at 2015 internal CSU Learning & Teaching conference
- Some attention to OER in CSU's Smart Learning curriculum renewal process and in professional development of all Course Directors
- Preliminary redesign of compulsory Graduate Certificate on Learning & Teaching in Higher Education for university staff to encompass use of MOOCs as alternative assessment tasks
- Articulating this course into a new Masters level course on Open Online and Distance Education
- A recent Badges Project has scoped context for use of CSU badges.

- Currently reinvigorating university policies to incorporate openness and OERs. **These include:**

- o Development of a Distance Education Strategy which recognises the need to engage with OERs and integrate these with content developed at CSU; an Open Strategy is proposed as a separate policy;
- o Review of recognition of prior learning (RPL) policy which currently allows award of 60% or higher towards a CSU degree; exploring how much further this can be opened up;
- o Preliminary investigation of open degree pathways;
- o Mention of OER adoption and development in guidelines for academic promotion.

In 2014, there was a large amount of staff consultation around the new Distance Education Strategy, Badges Project, and proposed promotion policy changes which provided significant written feedback. OEP did not end up being an issue with the wider academic community, perhaps because there were bigger issues of concern and OEP was not the main focus. Senior Executive and Deans still have concerns from perspective of budget, risk and strategic return on investment which need to be addressed.



Outcomes

We hope that these preliminary activities will underpin the development of a CSU Open Strategy which on the one hand will provide greater visibility for CSU internationally as an online provider and on the other hand will increase the use of OERs for effective and efficient course design.

Issues & challenges

Familiarity of Senior Executive with concept of OEP is good but not in enough detail yet therefore risk averse at this stage. They require an evidence base of relevance of these strategies to market advantage compared with investment of time and money needed. Therefore in 2016, a Think Tank with Senior Executive on this topic will be hosted by ulmagine.

There is currently a low awareness amongst central T&L staff and academic staff with OEP. We are currently only working with early adopters. Therefore in 2015, one whole day of the annual T&L conference will be devoted to open education, Education without Borders, utilising a number of international keynote speakers. In 2016, selected courses will receive funding for the development of tasters and MOOCs in return for attention to reuse of open education resources within those courses.

Insights & recommendations for institutional & national development

Institutionally we recommend consultative development of institutional strategy; high levels of professional development; funding programs to foster OEP in course development.

Nationally we encourage awareness-raising activities about OEP including business models and creative commons licensing because high-level national activity will provide reinforcement and impetus for change with Senior Executives at the institutional level.

Contact person and details

Prof Sandra Wills, PVC Student Learning
pvcstudentlearning@csu.edu.au



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